



**Representative  
Kathy Haigh**

**35th District**

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- State Government Operations and Accountability (*chair*)
- Appropriations
- Education
- Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC)
- Capital Projects Advisory Review Board

# Legislative Roundup: 2006

Spring 2006

Dear friends,

What an honor it is to be your state representative. It was my privilege this year to take part in a historic legislative session, one that many are calling one of the most effective and efficient in decades.

During the 2006 session, which adjourned early for the first time in recent memory, we were able to pass legislation and fund budget items – *without increasing taxes* – that will benefit most everyone here in the 35th district, now and far into the future. Significant laws were enacted that will make the entire state safer, healthier, better educated and more prosperous. And we were fortunate to be able to achieve breakthrough compromises on a number of truly major issues that had troubled our state for years.

The session is being praised as a good one by farmers and environmentalists; by small business and big business and organized labor; by doctors and lawyers; by rural residents, suburbanites and city-dwellers.

In fact, about the only people I can think of who truly won't find anything to like about this year's newly crafted laws are sexual predators, methamphetamine producers and drunk drivers – and that suits me just fine.

I hope you'll find this brief report helpful and informative. As always, I am at your service throughout the year – to help you solve government-related problems, to answer your questions, to hear your comments and suggestions, and to work with you on potential legislation for the upcoming session. Please keep in touch, and again, thank you for letting me have the opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely,

Kathy Haigh





# Representative Kathy Haigh

## Early Learning

If we truly want to leave no child behind in our society, we need to make better use of the early years. That's one reason I advocate giving parents the option of full-day kindergarten for their children, and it's why I worked to establish the new Department of Early Learning. This innovative new agency consolidates more than 15 currently existing programs – spread throughout the government – into one efficient, tightly focused agency, with the single goal of helping our kids reach their learning potential.



My primary disappointment this year is that the Legislature did not make statewide, voluntary full-day kindergarten a reality. Children who attend full-day kindergarten enter the first grade much better prepared to learn and succeed in school and in life. Currently, 60 percent of preschoolers in Washington can attend locally funded full-day kindergartens in their communities, but what of the 40 percent who cannot? Youngsters in struggling communities should not have to lag behind their counterparts in more prosperous cities, and that's why I've championed full-day kindergarten as a state program. We came close this year, and now that the governor, the superintendent of public instruction and the speaker of the House have all come on board, I believe we'll give parents this option soon. Please note the word "option." The state should not compel parents to put their children in full-day kindergarten against their wishes. But we owe it to every parent to at least offer them the same opportunity that most already enjoy.

## K-12 Schools

You've heard it before: The basic education of our kids is the state's "paramount duty." You'll hear a lot of opinions about what "basic" means, but I think we all agree on one thing: An increasingly competitive workplace and global economy increase the need for our schools to prepare every student for college or other job training, so they can have a fighting chance to make it in the 21st century.



Part of that means helping students receive meaningful high-school diplomas. That's what the WASL is designed to demonstrate, but we recognize there are other ways for students to

show they've met the high new standards that are such an important part of Washington's education reform. We made two of these alternatives official this session: Students who simply do not test well can submit a portfolio of their high-school work (including vocational programs), or they can use a comparison of grades in core classes with peers in those classes who passed the WASL.

We were able this session to secure good funding to improve Washington's unique network of skills centers, including two that directly serve students from the 35th district. The New Market Skills Center in Tumwater and the West Sound Technical Skills Center in Bremerton will share in a multi-million-dollar allocation to upgrade facilities and equipment used by students learning trades and career skills in fields as varied as veterinary medicine, auto mechanics, cooking, public safety, information technology, construction and forestry.

Overall, this year's supplemental operating budget stepped up K-12 investments by \$183 million, and we put an additional \$275 million into savings as a hedge against future education expenses. Some highlights of this year's K-12 budget, besides WASL alternatives and skills centers, include:

- Voter-approved salary increases for K-12 employees (\$50 million)
- Mentoring for middle- and high-school students (\$4 million)
- Transportation and utility cost increases (\$7.7 million)
- Funding equity: levy equalization (\$4.8 million)
- School breakfast programs (\$2 million)



## Higher Education

Higher education is crucial to economic development for individuals, families, communities and our whole state. This year your Legislature focused on ways to increase access to every tier of higher education. Modest spending hikes have created opportunities for 8,400 more students to enroll in our two- and four-year colleges. We also created the Opportunity Grant program to help hundreds of low-income adults receive post-high-school training for jobs in high-demand fields.

Olympic Community College, which is based in Bremerton with a very successful branch in Shelton, will open its doors to many of these additional students, and a separate allocation (for a total of more than \$8 million) will allow OCC and other schools to serve even more students. We also stepped up to provide much-needed pay raises for community-college staff and faculty, as well as health insurance for many faculty members who currently are not covered.

## Election Reform

One of my top priorities this session as chair of the House State Government Operations and Accountability Committee was to complete the one remaining job that was left over from last year's election-reform efforts. That job involved changing the law to allow our state primary to take place earlier in the year, and I'm happy to report that we were successful this time around.

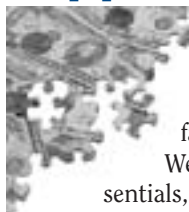
By moving the primary to the third Tuesday in August beginning in 2007, we'll allow more than enough time to count ballots from our military personnel and other overseas citizens, and still be able to tally the results and print up ballots for the general election. We had problems with this in the past, and this is one more way to help restore the integrity of our election system. The changes we've made in the last two years have made Washington a national leader in election reform. This has been a bipartisan, citizen-driven effort, and I think that will be evident to everyone who takes part in our state's upcoming round of elections.





# Legislative Roundup: 2006

## Supplemental Budget



Lawmakers were presented during this year's session with something that hasn't been seen in Olympia since the beginning of the decade: a revenue surplus. We did what I think most families would have done in a similar situation.

We paid some overdue bills, invested in some essentials, and put the bulk of the windfall into reserves to help deal with the inevitable rainy day.

### The supplemental operating budget . . .

- Invests in seniors and disabled adults by devoting millions to improve home care, nursing home services, adult family homes, boarding homes and adult day health services.
- Provides energy assistance for low-income families.
- Creates the Veterans' Innovation Program to help veterans get good jobs and reintegrate into our communities. (As the federal government backs away from its obligations to our veterans, the state has no choice but to increase its military and veteran services.)
- Expands affordable-housing options.
- Extends the 2-1-1 Washington information system statewide. The 2-1-1 system gives Washington residents a single source for information about health and human services, emergency evacuation routes, government resources and other important items that don't really belong in the more familiar 9-1-1 system. I requested a budget allocation this year to take the 2-1-1 number statewide after seeing a real need for such a system during the emergency preparedness hearings my colleagues and I held last year.
- Makes a significant investment in K-12 education, including funds for special education – another case of the state having to step in and do the federal government's job.
- Adds 6,500 Basic Health Plan slots.
- Increases breast cancer and cervical cancer screenings statewide.
- Implements an innovative new small-employer health-insurance program.
- Supports community health clinics providing free and reduced-cost medical care.



And here is one of the most significant things our budget this year does: It puts more than \$940 million – almost a billion dollars – into the student achievement account, the health services account, the pension stabilization account and an additional general reserve account. In a family budget or in a state budget, money not spent is money saved, and this budget saves nearly a billion dollars to help us get through

inevitable future downturns without unpopular tax increases or drastic service cuts.



## Tax Incentives

One thing the Legislature was able to do this year was provide Washington employers and industries with targeted tax incentives to help them create and retain jobs. Some of these in-

centives, such as our Energy Freedom measures to encourage the production and use of alternate fuels here in the Evergreen State, will give rise to brand-new, 21st-century industries. Others, like the reduced B&O tax rate for the timber industry, are designed to reinvigorate ailing industries that have been key to Washington's economic success in the past 100 years. The total of these incentives for the 2005-07 biennium comes to a little over \$53 million. That's a significant amount by any measure, but this is an investment that should pay off many times over for families in every part of the state . . . and especially here in the 35th district.

## Keeping Washington Families Safe

I imagine most everyone has heard by now that lawmakers passed strong new laws this session to protect our children by catching and convicting more sex predators, and by significantly increasing prison sentences.

We worked for months to develop good, smart, tough, effective and enforceable laws – laws that reflect the best thinking of prosecutors, law-enforcement professionals, victims, and victims' advocates, as well as Democratic and Republican lawmakers. Members of both parties overwhelmingly approved measures that will:



- Set minimum penalties of 25-to-life for most sexual offenses against children, toughening the punishment for strangers as well as adults known to the victim.
- Crack down harder on such predatory offenses as voyeurism, possession of child pornography, and communicating with minors through the Internet for immoral purposes.
- Enforce stringent new registration requirements for all sex offenders, including those who are homeless and those who move into Washington from out-of-state.
- Provide more support for victims of sexual assault, in the form of protection orders, counseling and other services that can facilitate healing.
- Monitor the whereabouts of released sex offenders. The fact is, with the longer sentences we passed this year, many sex offenders will spend the rest of their lives in prison, so they'll have no opportunity to re-offend. For most who do eventually get out, though, we'll monitor their whereabouts with GPS satellite technology – and even the slightest violation of their post-release conditions will result in renewed confinement.

I am proud to have been a part of the Legislature that worked and voted in a bipartisan manner to give our kids and families the protection they deserve.

# Representative Kathy Haigh Legislative Roundup: 2006



## Transportation

The 2006 supplemental transportation budget stays the course set by the historic Transportation Partnership Act of 2005, which was affirmed by the voters last fall. Additional funds were allotted for safety projects, for performance audits, for ferries, and to cut tolls in half when the new Tacoma Nar-

rows Bridge opens next year. Here in the 35th district, work has begun on various projects – you’ve seen the crews already – and I’m continuing to work with the Department of Transportation to expedite the new northbound on-ramp from Highway 3 onto 101. This is one of the most important safety-oriented projects in the entire plan.

## Clean Water

Once again, my friend and seatmate, Rep. Bill Eickmeyer, spearheaded the effort to restore the vitality of Hood Canal, a body of water crucial not only to our district but in many ways to the entire state. His legislative newsletter, which may have arrived in your homes already, is a great source of details on this year’s legislation, as well as the progress being made in this multi-year project.

Unfortunately, Hood Canal isn’t the only important body of water that’s currently in trouble. Puget Sound also is ailing, and the Legislature responded this session by investing better than \$50 million for a newly approved cleanup and recovery plan. Much of the Puget Sound problem stems from broken septic systems that put toxins into the water, and several million dollars were earmarked for grants and loans to help homeowners with septic repairs.



## Teens Provide Great Service as Pages

For 115 years now, Washington teenagers have been participating in state government by serving as legislative pages when the House and Senate are in session. Three young people from the 35th district helped extend that tradition this session by taking part in the page program under my sponsorship. Daniel Greig (L), 14, of Shelton, is the son of Kim Engel and Martin Greig. He is a ninth-grade student at Oakland Bay Junior High. Katie Pitchford (C), who is also 14, lives in Silverdale with her parents, Kiane and Clark Pitchford. She is a home-schooled ninth-grader. James Densley (R), is another 14-year-old. James, a young musician and athlete who calls Shelton home, is the son of Andrea and Jim Densley, and is in the eighth grade at Oakland Bay Junior High.

Students or parents interested in the page program for the 2007 session (Jan. 8 - Apr. 22) are invited to contact my office. Pages spend one week in Olympia, with housing and a meal allowance provided. To serve as a page, a student must:

- Be at least 14 years old but not yet 17;
- Have permission from their school and from their parents or legal guardian; and
- Be sponsored by a member of the House or Senate.



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